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No. 376

HOW NELLIE MADE GOOD

A PLAY IN ONE ACT AND TWO SCENES

BY

M A R I E D O R A N

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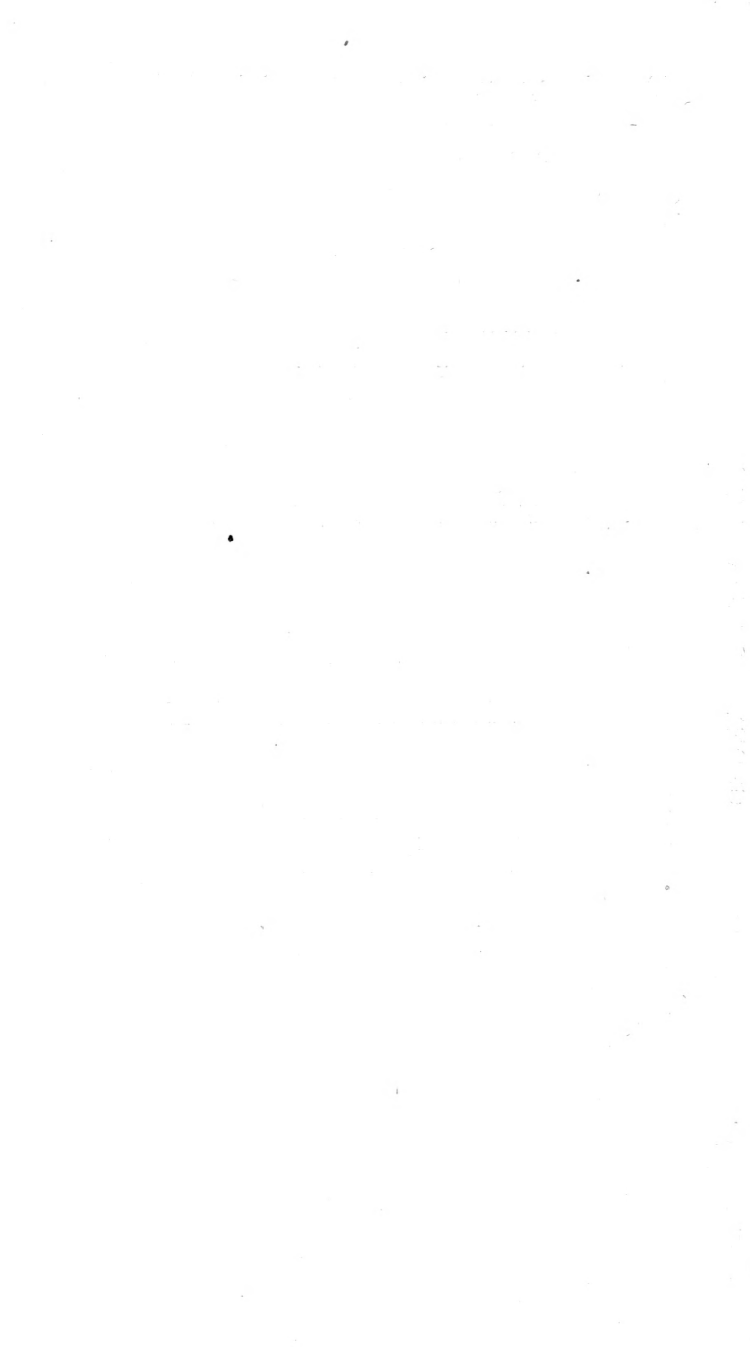
NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER

28-30 W. 38TH. STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, Ltd.
STRAND

26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET

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BY
MARIE DORAN

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HOW NELLIE MADE GOOD

THE CHARACTERS

NELLIE TUCKER

MRS. MARTHA PIERCE

EDITH WARD

DORIS CARTER } *Nieces of Mrs. Pierce*

FLORENCE HARRIS *Edith's Chum*

MAGGIE MCCARTHY.. *The Dressmaker's Daughter*

MILLIE

MARY } *Members of The Helpers' Club*

LULU JONES..... *An Old Southern Mammy*

SCENE—*A large city in any State.*

The scenes of the play occur in the living-room in the home of Mrs. Martha Pierce. It is an attractive, home-like interior, furnished in simple good taste.

A door, R. of C. at the back; window C. (If inconvenient to arrange, the window may be omitted. If desired, a mantel and fireplace may be placed up C. instead of the window). A door on the L. Both doors have interior backing. The window has pretty curtains; portiers on the R. door, which stands open throughout the scene, or, an arch may be used, opening on a hall. Interior backing at the doors, and exterior at the window. If the mantel is substituted for the window, dress it with three or four pieces

of bric-a-brac. Small stand or table, and chair, up c. between mantel (or window) and door R. A writing desk down R. against the wall, with a telephone on it, and writing materials. Light chair at desk. Arm chair R. of c. down stage. Table L. of c. with chairs R. and L. of it. Piano may be placed in the L. U. corner, and any other furnishings desired to dress the stage, but do not crowd. The furnishings should be light and pretty in tone, and the room is fully lighted all through. It is a summer afternoon.

NELLIE TUCKER is of a gentle, sympathetic nature. Her first dress is a neat street costume, with hat and handbag. Second dress, a simple house dress with small white apron.

DORIS CARTER, is a bright, warm-hearted, rather impetuous girl. First dress, street costume, hat; second dress, similar—something that will blend with the ballroom gowns of the other girls, if the musical number is used.

EDITH WARD, is an imperious, overbearing selfish girl, with an emotional side to her character. Two pretty house dresses.

MRS. PIERCE is a widow, about fifty years old. Gray hair, gentle, rather timid manner, but able to express firmness later in the play. Neat house dress and cap, which may be worn all through.

FLORENCE HARRIS wears very handsome afternoon dress, hat and gloves, wrist watch. Her second dress is a ball dress, with light wrap, to remove, if desired.

LILLIE AND MARY, average American girls in good circumstances, wear ball dresses, with light wraps, to be removed.

LULU JONES, is a Southern Mammy, about fifty

odd years o'd; very black; vigorous and assertive. Bright hued house dress, cap and apron. The same will answer for both scenes.

MAGGIE McCARTHY, an aggressive little Irish girl with red curls, dialect, but not extravagant, quick temper. Neat street dress and hat in both scenes; she may change if desired.

PROPERTIES

Letter, stamped envelope and check for Mrs. Pierce.

Tea Service, on tray for Lulu: 1 cup and saucer, tea with milk and sugar.

Boquet of small flowers for Edith.

Medium sized pasteboard box for Maggie; it is securely tied; dressmaker's bill; three bound volumes, two paper parcels, tied, suitcase—all for Maggie.

Three letters in envelopes, sealed and stamped for Nellie.

HOW NELLIE MADE GOOD

DISCOVERED: *At rise* MRS. PIERCE *is seated L. of table L. earnestly regarding a letter in her hand.*

Enter from R. the colored servant, LULU JONES; she carries a tray with tea service; advancing to C.

LULU. I'se done brung yo' your tea, Mis' Pierce.
(*Advancing to R. of table where she places the tray*)

MRS. P. (*Looking up from the letter*) Thank you, Lulu. (*Sighing heavily*)

LULU. (*Catching the sigh*) What's matter, Mis' Pierce?

MRS. P. This letter is very disturbing!

LULU. Somebody sick? (*Placing cup and saucer from tray, on table*)

MRS. P. No——

LULU. Dead?

MRS. P. Lulu! goodness! no! But one may be greatly disturbed by other misfortunes. (*Regarding the letter*)

LULU. Don't see how nuthin' else could be misfortunate. (*Arranging cup and saucer, and preparing to pour the tea*) Mebbe 'tain't jes' much to be complain' 'bout. (*Pouring tea*) Drink yo' tea Mis' Pierce, an' you'll feel better. (*Handing the cup of tea to Mrs. P. across the table*)

MRS. P. (*Taking cup*) I always confide in you Lulu—indeed I don't see how I could do without your sympathy—you've been with us so many years.

LULU. (*With pride*) Yes'm—mo'n twenty-two

years! 'Fore yo' husband died—'fore Miss Doris an' Miss Edith ever was borned—! I seen Mis' Doris bury her mother, an' her father—(*Moving a step toward c.*) An' I seen how good hearted yo' was—havin' Mis' Doris come to live with yo. Den I recommeber that other day, when the tel'gram done came——

MRS. P. The day we heard about the death of Edith's mother.

LULU. Den Mis' Edith come live 'long with us, too—an' we has cert'y had some right big excitements with her! (*Sharply*) Dont nev' see why she can't b'have herself!

MRS. P. I think she was spoiled before she came to us.

LULU. (*Surprised*) Spoiled! Why her father is one ob the most aggravatinest man I ev'r did see! Jes' jumps at folks as if—as if he was a blood-hound!

MRS. P. This letter is from my brother—(*Indicating letter*)

LULU. (*Turning to Mrs. P.*) Am dat what yo' is worryin' 'bout?

MRS. P. Yes; listen; (*Reading letter*) "My dear Sister:—I received your letter acknowledging mine with inclosure. You will find herein the usual monthly check toward your maintainance, sharing with my daughter Edith. The remittance is reduced this month, made necessary by lack of business, due to the war. I hope the reduction will not greatly inconvenience you, but do not see my way clear to an increase until trade conditions improve. I wish you would explain to Edith that my income is materially decreased, and urge upon her the necessity of seeking employment. In the great changes that have come to the world during the struggle through which we have just passed, women have come to the front in business, and Edith should realize the neces-

sity of work, which will benefit herself, as well as you who have been so kind to her. Tell her this in plain words. She wrote me, saying she wanted some extra money to buy a new dress for a bail. I will endeavor to send it. With love to yourself, Edith and Doris, I am—your affectionate brother, John." There is the check—(*Picking it up from the table*)—twenty-five dollars less than usual.

LULU. (*Consolingly*) I reckon we can manage somehow, Mis' Pierce—no oysters on Friday, no ice cream on Sunday—an' stay home from dem movies!

MRS. P. (*Rising*) Those trivial sacrifices do no trouble me—it is my brother's suggestion about Edith. (*Advancing a step*) How she will storm when I propose work to her!

LULU. Das so—mos' fearful temper dat chile has! But I tells yo' all 'long yo' has got to be mo' stricter!

MRS. P. Her father was very strict with her at home—that's why she prefers to live with us. But I really wish he would come and place this proposition before her—it makes me tremble. (*Crossing toward arm-chair R. of C.*)

LULU. (*Turning to Mrs. P. as she reaches arm-chair*) Don't you go tremblin' honey—I'll stan' right back o' yo'—an' yo' jes' come out strong an' pow'ful like—tell her what's what! Marsa Ward am right—girls has got to be mo' usefulesthan they ev'r was befo'—no mo' lazyn' aroun'. (*Turning to table L.*) Yo' didn't tech yo' tea! (*Taking up cup*) Eve'body has got to be mo' spry sence the world's got all tore up!

MRS. P. If we can only make Edith see that truth! (*Seating herself in arm-chair, anxiously regarding letter*)

LULU. Drink yo' tea. (*Crossing to Mrs. P. with*

cup) I reckon it might give yo' courage—it'll do yo' no kind o' harm nohow.

(MRS. P. takes the cup of tea, and sips it, indifferently, her attention always reverting to the letter.)

MRS. P. I'm terribly afraid of Edith when she is angry——

LULU. (*Bristling with resentment*) I ain't no-ways scared o' her! But ef yo' feels dat a-way, I jes' recommend some kind o' weapon!

MRS. P. Weapon! (*Staring at LULU in amazement*)

LULU. Yes'm—mebbe a broomstick, or dish pan or 'tater smasher! (*Regarding MRS. P. with a comic threatening look from one corner of her eye*)

MRS. P. (*In mild horror*) What a dreadful suggestion!

LULU. Might be! (*Chuckling laugh*) I reckon dis war's made me kind o' pestif-rous—kind o' look-in' out fo' myself—das what our preacher says in church las' Sunday—somethin' 'bout protectin' our country without arms—I don't make no sense out o' dat—nev' could protect myself without my arms!

MRS. P. He means no more guns and bullets! (*Sipping tea*)

LULU. Oh la! Dat what he means! (*Laughing*) I done mistook him! Don't b'lieve in guns myself, but I does b'lieve in some'in to whack sense into folkses heads what ain't got none from de time they was borned! (*Crossing to table, she picks up the sugar bowl, turning toward MRS. P. with it, finally reaching her, and putting some sugar in the cup of tea*)

MRS. P. (*Nervously*) Perhaps you will say something forceful when I speak of the matter to Edith.

LULU. 'Deed I can—I can *talk* when I gets all full o' wrath—glo'—yo' should hear me! (*Batting her eyes threateningly*)

(*Off R. DORIS CARTER laughs, and then she calls in a clear happy voice.*)

DORIS. (*Outside R.*) Aunt Martha!

LULU. (*Turning a step up c.*) Das' my honey chile! (*Looking toward R.*)

(*Enter DORIS from R. briskly.*)

DORIS. (*As she enters*) Aunt Martha! Here you are! I have the greatest news. (*Advancing quickly down-stage*) Get out of my way Lulu—don't you see what a hurry I'm in! (*Laughing, she gives LULU a push, which sends her back toward table, LULU chuckling, amused, while DORIS pauses at Mrs. PIERCE's chair*) Guess what it is! Guess—guess, guess!

MRS. P. My dear Doris! How excited you are!

DORIS. Guess!

MRS. P. I never can!

DORIS. (*Delighted*) I've got a job!

LULU. Bress my soul! (*Dropping into the chair at R. of table L. allowing the sugar bowl to drop into her apron*)

DORIS. Think of it Aunt Martha! A job! (*Sinking on both knees beside the arm-chair*) Stenographer for the Commercial Trading Company, at sixteen plunks per!

MRS. P. (*Puzzled*) Plunks! Per! What does that mean?

DORIS. Don't you know? (*Laughing*) Plunks means dollars, and per—means per week! Sixteen dollars per week!

LULU. My sakes! Dat is a lot ob money fo' a chile like yo' to have!

DORIS. (*Jumping up, turning to LULU*) Don't you think I'm worth it?

LULU. (*Quickly*) 'Deed yo' is, honey, 'deed yo' is! (*Observing sugar spilled in her apron*) Fo' de sake o' 'or'! Yo' dona make me spill dat sugar! (*Gathering it up and putting it in the bowl*)

DORIS. (*Laughing*) What do we care for a little bit of sugar! Think of the salary I am going to get! Why we can buy a ton of sugar for one week's salary! (*Turning again to Mrs. P.*) Auntie, you haven't said a word!

MRS. P. I am glad my dear, and thankful—you didn't tell us you were looking for a position.

DORIS. (*Removing her hat, and rattling on*) What did you think I was learning all those little dots and dashes for—then, I wanted to surprise you. The war taught me that everybody should be doing something—now, I think it's an awful sin for any person to be idle—especially girls! It's my turn to help—there is so much to be done—the whole world must be fixed up!

LULU. (*Rising*) Is yo' goin' to help fix it, honey?

DORIS. (*Positively*) I am! We must do something for others you know—with your little income, and my sixteen dollars, and Uncle John's money—we'll be rich!

MRS. P. I have just received a letter from your Uncle. (*Sighing as she extends the letter to DORIS*)

DORIS. (*Taking letter*) Everybody well and happy? (*Reading the letter rapidly, mumbling through all but the passages to be emphasized*) "My dear sister—I received"—(*Mumbling*)—m-m-m-m—"the remittance is reduced this month"—(*Explanation*) Oh dear! (*Continuing*)—"made necessary by lack of business, due to the war." (*Ob-*

serving) Poor Uncle John! (*Continuing letter*) "I wish you would explain it to Edith—" m-m-m-m—"urge upon her the necessity of seeking employment." (*Exclamation*) Great heavens! Imagine Edith working! (*Laughing, then resuming letter*)—"should realize"—I am afraid Edith will never come to that!

MRS. P. The check is twenty-five dollars less than usual. (*Regarding check which she retains*)

DORIS. (*Mirily*) That won't matter, Auntie dear—now that my sixteen will be coming along! (*Takes the tea cup from Mrs. P.*)

LULU. (*Dryly*) I reckon if yo' ev'r went to school yo'd know dat twenty-five is mo'n sixteen!

DORIS. Don't be cross Lulu—just when we are so happy. (*Crossing to LULU, giving her the tea cup*) Out of my very first week's salary, I shall make you a present of a new red hat!

LULU. (*Comic disgust*) A red hat! Doesn't yo' know dat I perfectly despise red! De colors dat I has respect fo' is *quiet*—like green—an' purple, an' pink, an' yellow! No red! Red is fo' dem anarchists—an'—(*Fervently*)—I ain't no anarchists!

DORIS. All right Lulu! (*Laughing*) Then I'll buy you a *yelloze* hat. (*Center*)

LULU. Don't yo' get x-tarvagant honey!

MRS. P. (*Rising*) How will we break this news to Edith?

LULU. (*With show of bravado*) I'll make dat denouncement!

DORIS. (*Creeping toward LULU*) Aren't you af-ra-aid—! (*Shivering, then laughing at LULU*) Who can picture Edith rising at 6 a. m., snatching her breakfast, racing for the trolley, and reporting at the employees entrance at 7:45! (*Laughing*) Oh lady! She'll explode when she hears it! (*Laughing, as she turns up c. and places her hat on stand*)

LULU. Yo' jes' leave it to me. *I'll show dat young lady who am de boss ob dis house!*

(*Off R. EDITH WARD is heard singing a snatch of song, in a clear strong voice.*)

DORIS. (*Up c. looking R.*) Here comes Edith. (*Turning to LULU*) Are we ready!

LULU. (*Comic fear*) I—I thinks mebbe I waits 'till dis evenin'—(*Crossing hurriedly, nervously to L. door*) I fee's mo' braver after I gets my supper, an' says my prayers! (*At L. door, carrying sugar bowl and tea cup*)

(*MRS. PIERCE moves rather nervously toward L. door.*)

DORIS. You're all afraid! (*Laughing*)

(*EDITH continues singing off R. tempering to suit the situation.*)

LULU. (*At L. door*) Ain't afraid o' nothin'—(*EDITH strikes a strong high note*) Oh glor'—I thinks I smells somethin' burnin' on de stove! (*She exits hurriedly L.*)

MRS. P. Perhaps you better speak to her Doris, —you are so sunny and tactful.

DORIS. Tactful! (*Light laugh*) You mean I'm not afraid of her—think of one small girl terrifying the household!

MRS. P. She *does* make me nervous.

DORIS. Leave her to me—with the letter. Of course she'll tear and rant, but I'm used to that.

MRS. P. (*Crossing to L. door*) I have always been inclined to lean on someone, though I'm ashamed to say it.

DORIS. Not a bit—just lean on me—goodness,—when I was a child, I looked to you for everything,

and you never failed. It's my turn—let Edith storm if she will—we'll do our duty as Uncle John has asked. (*Regarding letter*)

MRS. P. Thank you my dear—you are very good—if only Edith was like you! (*DORIS laughs as MRS. P. exits L.*)

(*EDITH WARD off R. has continued her song, rather subdued. DORIS crosses quickly to table where she lays the open letter; then she crosses to desk R. where she sits and makes a pretense of writing a note. Enter from R. EDITH, singing softly, carrying a small bunch of flowers, which she is arranging to fasten in her gown. She turns an indifferent glance upon DORIS at the desk, then pauses down C. busy with her flowers. DORIS at desk, picks up the refrain of the song and sings it softly, with EDITH, which annoys EDITH.*)

EDITH. (*To DORIS, impatiently*) Oh stop, will you! That squeaking voice of yours!

DORIS. That's a pretty song—and you sing it beautifully, Edith. (*Smiling at EDITH*)

EDITH. Think so? (*Continuing song*)

DORIS. I'm going to learn it.

EDITH. You'll make a failure of it—as you do of everything! (*Sharply*) Who told you you could use that desk?

DORIS. Nobody. (*Looking at EDITH, smiling*) Think I'm brassy?

EDITH. Heaping yourself to my best envelopes, I suppose? (*Watching DORIS*)

DORIS. Um um—writing a note to Nellie.

EDITH. That Tucker girl?

DORIS. Um—um—

EDITH. How *can* you associate with such an ordinary person?

DORIS. (*Rising, advancing, earnestly*) Nellie is brainy and capable—is that what you call ordinary? It is ordinary people who are doing things these days, and the world is finding them out—it was an ordinary army of brave boys who helped crush Prussianism—and it is just ordinary people in mighty co-operation who will set this great world straight—and keep it straight!

EDITH. (*Looking at her; sarcastically*) Dear me! What an orator you have become since you joined that club! (*Crossing to L. below table*)

DORIS. (*Advancing a step, with warmth*) The Helpers! it's a dear little club—we're doing things—and we're going to expand—

EDITH. (*Indifferently*) Indeed!

DORIS. You know how terrifically we worked during the war—when the end came, we had a lot of energy saved up—it must be used—it was Nellie who suggested the club. I wish you'd join us, Edith.

EDITH. (*Turning toward DORIS*) You haven't anybody in the club but working girls!

DORIS. It's true we have no slackers. (*Looking steadily at EDITH*)

EDITH. I mean—you have no aristocrats. (*Seating herself L. of table L. C.*)

DORIS. It's not a bit fashionable to loaf! (*Smiling at EDITH*) Let me tell you about a case our club handled. (*Center*)

EDITH. (*Sarcastically*) Sick child, I suppose?

DORIS. The little one of a man who was wounded in France!

EDITH. (*Same tone*) Mother delicate, or lame—or something!

DORIS. Delicate, yes—she worried so much about her husband—but our club has provided a doctor for her—a splendid, big-hearted doctor—who says she will get well!

EDITH. (*Bored*) I know—you always rave about doctors—you don't seem to think of anything but misery!

DORIS. It isn't misery! It's wonderfully cheering to make others happy! It just lifts you up!

EDITH. I don't want to be lifted up—I'm not a bit in sympathy with such plebian activities——

DORIS. There you stand, on a lonely mountain, like a poor selfish crow!

EDITH. Thank you for calling me a crow!

(*The L. door opens promptly, and LULU comes in step by step, cautiously, speaking as soon as she open the door.*)

LULU. Am de storm over? (*Advancing*)

(*DORIS laughs a bit and turns up c.*)

EDITH. (*Glancing at LULU*) There's no storm—stupid!

LULU. (*Sighing in relief, closing door*) I'se might' glad to hear dat! War expectin' thunder, an' lightning—an' hail stones!

DORIS. The storm has not commenced, Lulu! (*Up c. near door, regarding LULU comprehensively, and with a glance toward EDITH*)

EDITH. Take this rubbish away. (*Indicating tray on table*)

LULU. (*Crossing to table, picking up tray*) What yo' think o' yo' father's letter?

EDITH. What letter? (*Looking at LULU in surprise*)

DORIS. (*Quickly down to R. of LULU*) She hasn't read it!

LULU. Oh glor'! what has I said!

(*DORIS down R. below desk, laughing.*)

EDITH. (*Obscuring letter on the table*) This is from father. (*Picking up letter*) Why didn't you tell me? (*Quickly glancing through the letter*) Did he send the money I told him to send?

DORIS. Now for the fireworks!

(*LULU displays comic anticipation of EDITH's temper; crossing to arm chair R. C. firmly grasping the tray, and watching EDITH*)

EDITH. (*Repeating from letter*) "The remittance is reduced"—(*Indignantly*) And I wanted fifty more than usual! (*Reading*)—"income is materially decreased and urge upon her the necessity of seeking employment"—(*Indignantly*) What! My own father orders me to go to work! Oh! how dare he! (*Stamping her foot in rage*) How dare he! (*About to destroy the letter*)

LULU. (*Quick*) Don't yo' tar' dat letter—it am 'dressed to yo' Aunt Martha!

(*Enter MRS. PIERCE from L. remaining near the door as she observes the situation, looking at EDITH apprehensively.*)

EDITH. (*Reading from the letter, in anger*)—"And I feel that Edith should realize she must do her share"—(*Stormily*) My share! What about *his* share! It's the duty of a father to support his children, and there were only *seven* of us!

LULU. (*Promptly*) Might' big fam'ly in these hard times!

EDITH. (*Working to a stormy pitch*) Work! for me! I have never worked—*I* hate it!

MRS. P. Oh Edith, don't say that! (*Advancing a step toward C.*)

EDITH. (*Turning angrily toward MRS. P.*) You

put this notion in father's head—you never want me to enjoy myself!

MRS. P. I did not suggest it to your father——

EDITH. Someone did—and he is so selfish, so cruel, he wants to make a drudge of me! What work could I do?

LULU. (*Quick and wrathfully*) I don't reckon yo' could do nothin'—jes' nothin'!

EDITH. (*Stamping her foot at LULU*) Don't you talk back to me—you black creature! You're all against me—but if you think I'm going into the kitchen to spoil my hands, or into a factory to get stoop shouldered—you are mistaken! I'll never do it, never!

MRS. P. (*Advancing a step*) Your father does not want to make a servant of you Edith, although everyone serves someone—the President serves the country, the Governor serves his state, and we all serve each other if we do our duty.

EDITH. (*Sarcastically*) Unfortunately, I cannot be a president or a governor!

MRS. P. But you can take suitable employment.

EDITH. (*In anger*) I will not, I tell you, I will not! (*Throwing the letter on the floor*)

MRS. P. You see from your father's letter how much he feels the pressure.

EDITH. I don't care—it's ridiculous—when I am trying to keep up appearances for the sake of the family—what would my friends say if anyone in *this* house went out to work?

DORIS. You must have a lot of fool friends because it's more respectable to be a worker than a slacker.

EDITH. Oh you're so common!

DORIS. I presume you'll roll over with horror when I inform you that I shall do something even more common by going to work at 8 a. m. to-morrow.

EDITH. (*Shocked*) Doris! You don't mean it!

DORIS. You bet I do! Sixteen per!

EDITH. (*Indignantly*) Could anything be meaner—more ungrateful! (*All regard EDITH in surprise*) My friends think we are independently well off—that we live on an income from profitable investments!

DORIS. Terribly hard to live up to—investments! You'll have to explain that the gold mines went dry!

EDITH. You must cancel your absurd arrangement—for my sake.

DORIS. (*Astonished*) Give up my lovely job—nixey nay, my dear lad-ie! I'm going to help Aunt Martha and lots of other people who need me!

EDITH. (*On verge of tears*) It is useless to plead with people as hard hearted as you are! You don't care for my feelings, but if the disgrace kills me, perhaps you'll regret it! (*Turning toward L. door*)

LULU. (*Promptly*) 'Deed I won't! An' I doesn't 'specs you'll be dyin' fo' might long time! But if yo' does, reckon won't make much di'fence—dis ol' world'll keep right on goin' 'round', an' 'roun', an' 'roun', an' 'roun', an' 'roun'.

EDITH. (*At L. door, to LULU*) You obnoxious creature!

(*LULU displays comic amazement at the word "obnoxious."*)

MRS. P. (*Picking up letter and turning to EDITH*) Take this with you Edith—read it carefully—I hope you will see the wisdom, the justice and the benefit of your father's suggestion! (*Extending letter*)

EDITH. You are all horrid—I shall leave this house at once—and never come back until you apolo-

pize! (*Almost snatching the letter from Mrs. P. Exit L.*)

LULU. (*Sharply*) Den yo' can stay out—'cause when I 'poligize—dat'il be when I'se in heben!

Mrs. P. (*Advancing dozen to L. of c.*) Perhaps Edith will change her mind——

LULU. I jes' hopes she doesn't—(*Crossing to L. door with tray*) I nev' did se no sech desposition! Reckon yo' can't teach her sense 'less yo' get a constable, or sheriff, or somethin' like dat! (*Exit L. carrying tray*)

DORIS. (*Enthusiastically*) Won't it be splendid to come home every week with my sixteen dollars!

Mrs. P. You do need a spring suit, child. (*Sitting at R. of table L. c.*)

DORIS. (*Center*) I'm not thinking about clothes but about our club—the Helpers—you know the object—to help the mothers of men so badly wounded they cannot do much work. You have no idea how many such cases—Tillie and Mary have been investigating—I'm going to divide if you're willing. (*Counting on her fingers*) There'll be ten dollars a week for you—four in the treasury of the club—

Mrs. P. What about your lunch and car fare? (*Smiling at DORIS*)

DORIS. I won't be hungry for lunch—and I can walk—I need exercise. (*A step toward R.*)

Mrs. P. It is very generous and beautiful of you my dear——

DORIS. (*Abruptly*) That reminds me—I have another secret to proclaim—it's about Nellie Tucker—our Secretary and Treasurer.

Mrs. P. Yes?

DORIS. Nellie lost her position a month ago—poor chummy! The ending of the war simply finished her firm—they had to lay her off—I'm sure Nellie is in a desperate situation.

MRS. P. (*Rising*) Can't we do something to help her?

DORIS. I knew you'd say that! (*Advancing to Mrs. P.*)—big hearted little Aunt Martha! (*Taking one hand and patting it affectionately*) Mrs. McCarthy, the dressmaker with whom Nellie lodges, cannot afford to keep Nellie when she cannot pay her rent and board. So—perfectly sure of my Auntie—I've asked Nellie to come and live with us until she finds a position!

MRS. P. (*Pleased*) That was just like you, wasn't it?

DORIS. And just like you, wasn't it? (*Laughing, throwing her arms about Mrs. P.*)

MRS. P. We couldn't do otherwise than befriend an orphan girl without home or money.

DORIS. Of course not, and she'll be here any moment.

MRS. P. I wonder how Edith will take it? (*Nervously*)

DORIS. Don't fret about Edith—let her splash! (*Crossing toward chair R. C.*) Besides, has she not decided to leave us? You will need someone to help you—Lulu is a bluff—and Nellie is wonderfully adaptable! She can sew, and pound the typewriter—yes, and she can run an automobile!

MRS. P. We haven't one.

DORIS. I'm going to buy one when I get a raise!

MRS. P. (*Smiling*) Wonderful plans! I hope they'll all come true!

(*Enter from R. NELLIE TUCKER.*)

NELLIE. May I come in?

DORIS. (*R. turning quickly*) Nellie! Of course you may! (*Advancing, conducting NELLIE forward*) You know my Aunt—Mrs. Pierce?

NELLIE. I met Mrs. Pierce at a club meeting—

I well remember her liberal donation.

DORIS. Aunt Martha! You never told me! (*To NELLIE*) She deprives herself all the time to make others happy.

NELLIE. Like her niece! (*Smiling at DORIS*)

MRS. P. (*Taking NELLIE'S extended hand*) Miss Tucker——

NELLIE. Call me Nellie, won't you, please?

MRS. P. I shall be glad to, my dear. I hope you have come to stay with us.

NELLIE. You know what this impulsive girl has done? (*Indicating DORIS*) I came to tell you how grateful I am—but I cannot possibly accept your generous offer.

DORIS. Of course you'll accept it! We need you——

NELLIE. You are saying that for my benefit—still I cannot impose upon such good friends.

DORIS. Perhaps a fairy godmother has arrived at your doorstep since last I saw you?

NELLIE. No—I am sorry to say—I have been out all morning, going up in elevators, waiting in offices and factories—but I haven't been successful. There seems to be a great deal of unemployment, and I must take my chances with the rest.

MRS. P. Taking chances is often a serious matter, and I wish you would come to us while you are—taking chances.

NELLIE. My friends! I want to be perfectly frank with you—(*Somewhat embarrassed*)—I cannot meet my expenses—and you must not be burdened.

DORIS. Burdened! The very ridiculous idea! We shall make tremendous use of you—(*With pride*)—I'm going to work to-morrow!

NELLIE. (*Delighted*) You are! I'm delighted!

DORIS. So you see, we need you!

(Enter EDITH from L. her father's letter in her hand.)

MRS. P. It's true—Edith is going away—never to return!

EDITH. I've changed my mind—I shall not go for a month—after the ball. Father says—(*Glancing at letter*)—he will send me the money for a new dress.

MRS. P. (*To EDITH*) We thought you were really going——

DORIS. So we asked Nellie to come and live with us.

EDITH. That's a good idea! (*DORIS and MRS. P. look at her in surprise*) Before I start, I shall want a lot of sewing done, and errands, and farewell messages to my friends must be sent. You can do that, can't you? (*Looking at NELLIE*) It will help pay your board.

DORIS. (*Embarrassed and distressed*) Oh, Edith! You spoil everything. (*A step to R. her face averted*)

EDITH. Indeed! (*To NELLIE*) Take off your hat and I'll show you what to do.

MRS. P. (*To EDITH, quiet dignity*) Not so fast, Edith; Miss Tucker is our guest—not your servant.

EDITH. (*Gasping in amazement*) We-ll! of all the absurd things. Trying to play lady before me! I've heard about you Nellie Tucker—you're out of work, and you haven't a cent, is that true?

DORIS. (*Indignantly*) Edith!

NELLIE. (*To EDITH*) It's true that I am out of work, and that I—have very little money—that is why I am not accepting the hospitality of Mrs. Pierce and Doris.

EDITH. I like that independent spirit—it's just like me—I shall need you most of the time—but odd moments, I'm perfectly willing for you to help Aunt

Martha! (*To MRS. P.*) I shall be with you just a month—until after the big Relief ball—then you will have nothing but the sweet remembrance of my presence!

(*A loud rap is heard outside R. door; all look toward the door. Enter MAGGIE MCCARTHY carrying the bound volumes, two parcels, and suitcase—about all she can manage.*)

MAGGIE. Good day folks—are ye home? I see ye are! (*Advancing*) Would ye catch that ma'am before I drop it! (*Extending a parcel by the string—MRS. PIERCE takes it*) And there's one for ye—(*Extending another to NELLIE*)—faith, they're all for ye.

MRS. P. Are you moving, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Yes ma'am, I'm moving Miss Nellie's things—to save the expressman—some o' thim are such grafters.

DORIS. What do you mean, Maggie?

MAGGIE. (*Down to DORIS*) How do ye do Miss Doris—ye see whin your letter came inviting Miss Nellie to come an' live with ye, it was read to me mother——

NELLIE. Mrs. McCathy shares all my confidences.

MAGGIE. (*Center, the books and suitcase still in her hands*) Well, says me mother to Miss Nellie, "that's a fine chance, an' the best thing ye can do is to take it—in fact I think me mother said to grab it—(*NELLIE embarrassed, studies her shoe*) And, knowing Miss Nellie's—what's this I want to say?

EDITH. Pride?

MAGGIE. (*Firmly*) No—Miss Nellie's refinement and bashfulness—me mother and meself figured out that she would not accept the invitation, so I packed up her things, and there they are! (*Looking at books*) "Life of Washington"—"Poetry of

the War"—"Parliamentary Law"—Bless me soul! I could niver be readin' thim!

NELLIE. (*Distressed*) Maggie, do you realize that you are forcing me out?

MAGGIE. (*A bit defiantly*) If I am, I can't help it—me mother's boss. (*Placing the books in NELLIE'S arms and the suitcase at her feet*) Besides, we have a chance to rent the room at four dollars a week, and two weeks in advance! Me mother's a business woman as well as a dressmaker, and she'd never turn her back on a chance like that! I'll go and fetch some more! (*Exit briskly R.*)

DORIS. It couldn't have been managed better by a diplomat! (*Taking the books from NELLIE and placing them on top of desk R.*) Now you must stay with us.

MRS. P. (*Taking parcel from NELLIE*) Maggie's way is best—let me take this, and assure you how glad we are to have you with us. Edith, will you open the door, please. (*EDITH turns to L. door opening it for MRS. P.*) Luncheon will be ready in a few moments. (*Exit L. MRS. P. carries the parcels off; DORIS returns and picking up the suitcase, places it well over R. below desk*)

NELLIE. It seems like forcing myself upon you.

(*EDITH closes the door after MRS. P. exits, and remains up near door.*)

DORIS. (*Advancing*) Tut tut! It's settled and we owe Maggie Mac a vote of thanks. Take off your hat and in three wags of the cat's tail, we'll eat. Then we'll explore and talk club affairs.

NELLIE. (*Opening her handbag*) I have our cash box—there was a robbery in the house just across the street from Mrs. McCarthy's—if they came over and got this—(*Taking the box from her bag*)—how could I ever replace it? It's club funds

you know—not much, but the gir's will surely add to it with the entertainment they are to give ahead of the Relief ball.

DORIS. We ought to make millions!

NELLIE. I want to tell you about Mrs. Clarke—*(Addressing EDITH as well as DORIS)* a widow with five young children. Danny, the only son, was nineteen when he went overseas. He came back—with both arms severed. He wants vocational training, and she, poor mother, is anxious to keep the other children in school—she will need their help, now that Danny is crippled for life. Our girls felt that we should pay part of her rent—it would lighten the burden, and it would give her courage to know that someone was thinking of her, and helping Danny—who did so much for us, in France.

DORIS. *(Earnestly)* There are so many Mrs. Clarkes, and so many Dannys.

NELLIE. That's why we thought our club might prove an incentive to others—if groups of girls in earnest did something, then no Danny, and no Danny's mother would suffer in this great rich country.

DORIS. It was your idea—your beautiful helpful thought! How much we hope it will go out to others!

EDITH. *(Down-stage a step)* Have you much in the cash box?

NELLIE. No-o—it is very light—I want a place to keep it—safe.

EDITH. You can put it in my desk over there. *(Indicating desk R.)* Is the box locked?

NELLIE. It isn't—we lost the key and it has not been replaced. *(A step toward R.)*

EDITH. Isn't that careless?

DORIS. Who would think of touching funds collected for such a cause!

EDITH. No one will know about it except us three and Aunt Martha.

NELLIE. Thank you so much. (*Crossing to desk and placing the box in the desk*) You are all so very kind to me, I hope I may be able to repay you in some way.

(*Enter LULU L.*)

LULU. Is you all read' fo' cup o' tea?

DORIS. I'm starved! (*Turning up to c.*)

LULU. I'se got corn muffins, an' apple jelly, an' chocolate cake!

DORIS. Right this way for the dining car! (*Taking NELLIE by the hand*) Come along Nellie—(*Drawing her quickly toward L. door*) Lulu, you're a darling cook!

(*NELLIE and DORIS laughing, exit L.*)

LULU. Das a young lady waitin' in de parlor fo' you, Mis' Edith.

EDITH. (*Sharply*) Why didn't you say so?—who is it?

LULU. Miss Harris—I done tol' her to come in! My! how she am dressed up!

EDITH. Her father is very rich—I wish I was—so I could have a few things I want. (*Advancing up c. looking off R.*)

LULU. (*At L. door*) Ain't dat tantalizin'! Such talk! (*Going off L.*) Reckon dar ain't nothin' good 'nough fo' yo' dis side o' heben! (*Exit L.*)

(*Enter from R. FLORENCE HARRIS, a pretty girl, very beautifully gowned.*)

FLORENCE. How do you do, Edith. (*Advancing*)

EDITH. Florence! I'm so glad to see you! (*Tak-*

ing her hand, and with one arm about her, conducting her down c.)

FLORENCE. I can't stop a minute—I'm going to Madame Lorene's.

EDITH. Another new gown!

FLORENCE. Yes—for the ball! (*The two girls move slowly toward the table L. where FLORENCE drops into the chair at R. of table, EDITH L.*) It's beautiful—pale rose with perfectly lovely silver embroidery! (NOTE: *The description of the dress may be changed to fit the costume subsequently worn by FLORENCE*) Have you decided what you will wear?

EDITH. (*Pouting*) What's the use? I may not go at all!

FLORENCE. (*Astonished*) Why not?

EDITH. Because I—I may as well tell you—I can't afford it!

FLORENCE. (*Astonished*) Can't afford it! I thought you said your father was independently rich!

EDITH. He used to be—but you know the war affected him——

FLORENCE. It did us, too—but, the right way. (*Light laugh*) Dad made a fortune on war contracts—and you can just believe my mother and father know how to keep all they get. We don't throw away money on charities and such nonsense! We're going to have a good time on our war profits! Heaven knows, after the glorious victory of our troops, we're entitled to it! (*Sitting back comfortably in her chair, with satisfaction*) But I'm awfully sorry about your affairs.

EDITH. I'm heart broken—I'm telling you because we are such friends——

FLORENCE. Of course we are——

EDITH. I shall die with disappointment—actually selected the dress I want——

FLORENCE. That dainty white affair at Ashley's?

It is sweet, and you would look stunning in it! Can't you manage it some way?

EDITH. Father may be able to send me a check—but suppose the dress is sold—it's just like some selfish girl to buy it when I would nearly give my life for it!

FLORENCE. People are so selfish—it's dreadful! Haven't you some friend you could borrow from?

EDITH. I don't know anyone—do you? (*Looking steadily at FLORENCE*) Do help me, Florry!

FLORENCE. (*Rising quickly*) I'd be perfectly delighted to accommodate you—only I'm always overdrawn at my bankers! (*Laughing a bit consciously*) And then I need such a lot of money for confectionery, and taxis—and matinees, and the florists—it counts up! Awfully sorry, dearie, but I really cannot manage it! (*Cheerfully*) Perhaps next summer I could!

EDITH. (*Rising, bitterly*) Next summer the ball will be history—and I shan't care what happens—next summer!

FLORENCE. It's quite terrible! (*Short laugh*) I must run along. (*Consulting her wrist watch and moving a step toward R. door*)

EDITH. It means, I can't go. (*Almost in tears*)

FLORENCE. Haven't you some old thing you can fix up?—buy some ribbon in the ten cent store and get some cheap dressmaker to give it a twist!

EDITH. (*Indignantly*) Do you think I'd go looking like a guy?

FLORENCE. How surprised our crowd will be when I tell the girls your father has lost all his money!

EDITH. (*Bitterly*) I wish you wouldn't publish it!

FLORENCE. I'll never repeat it—except to intimate friends! I have some tickets for a lecture—

I came in to sell one—only five dollars—but I suppose you can't take one?

EDITH. No——

FLORENCE. (*Briskly*) It's a shame your father wouldn't make *some* sacrifice for you—and there'll be so many swells at the ball, besides it's really a patriotic thing—some kind of a benefit for soldiers' mothers—it always looks well to appear at those affairs!

EDITH. (*Bitterly*) I shall miss it—I have a notion to kill myself!

FLORENCE. (*Laughing*) Oh! That's funny! (*Laughing*) It wouldn't help! Forget the ball and go to some free lecture on the Rocky Regions, or the power of electricity! (*Laughing*) I must run! (*Again glancing at her watch*) Good-bye—perhaps you'll think of some way to borrow it—think hard—bye bye——(*Exit R.*)

EDITH. (*Down L.*) Good bye—come again!

FLORENCE. (*Calling from outside*) I will—after the ball!

(*EDITH moves slowly to c. sighing, pausing irresolutely; she draws her father's letter from her dress and consults it.*)

EDITH. (*Quoting the letter*) "She wrote me, saying she wanted some extra money to buy a new dress to wear to a ball. I will endeavor to send it." (*Repeating, in low tone*) I will endeavor to send it. When father promises, he always keeps his word—and it is a promise—(*Looking closely at letter*)—yes, it is a promise. (*Repeating FLORENCE'S words*) That dainty white affair at Ashley's—you would look stunning in it—couldn't you borrow the money? (*Reflecting, then repeating*) Borrow it, and repay it when father's check comes! (*As if the inspiration had just come to her*) Of course I could! (*Looking R. her eye fastens on the box left in the desk by NELLIE. She gasps a bit, then she hurriedly,*

nervously crosses to the desk and lays her hand on the box) Borrow it! that's all! Borrow! (*She opens the box, then pauses earnestly contemplating the money in the box; slowly she picks up the bills and looks at it; slowly she brings the other hand into play and counts the bills*) Seventy-five dollars! (*With the money in her hand, her back toward R. door, when, unexpectedly, MAGGIE MCCARTHY enters carrying the dressmakers' box, which is tied and not opened*)

MAGGIE. (*Coming briskly forward*) Excuse me ma'am—(*Observing EDITH and the money*) Miss Edith—it's yourself I came to see!

(*EDITH, surprised, angry, embarrassed, quickly drops the R. hand holding the bills, to the desk, while she turns her head, regarding MAGGIE, resentfully.*)

EDITH. (*Sharp*) What do you want?

MAGGIE. I brought your waist—the pink one—it's in the box. (*Showing the box*) Me mother worked half the night to finish it for ye, 'cause ye said ye wanted it.

EDITH. Leave it there—(*Indicating chair R. c.*)

MAGGIE. (*Retaining the box*) I beg your pardon—here's the bill. (*Drawing the bill from under cord about the box*) I don't want to bother ye, neither does me mother, but we need the money—we have the rent to pay, and the grocery bill—and Jimmy needs a pair of shoes, and——

EDITH. (*Impatiently*) I don't want to hear about your affairs—how much is it?

MAGGIE. There's a little balance standing since last month, and this makes it all, six dollars and thirty-five cents. (*Extending bill to EDITH*)

EDITH. (*Advancing a step*) It's very high—but I'll pay it—can you change this? (*She draws a ten dollar bill from the money and extends it to MAGGIE*)

MAGGIE. (*Glancing at the money*) Ten dollars—of course I can't change it!

EDITH. I have nothing smaller. (*Replacing the bill with the other money*) You'll have to wait.

MAGGIE. (*Indignantly*) Then all I can say is, ye'll have to wait for your waist. (*Quickly to R. door, carrying box and bill*)

EDITH. (*Quick, astonished*) Are you going to take it away?

MAGGIE. (*At R. door*) I am—the last words me mother said was—"Maggie, bring the money or the box! If ye don't I'll beat ye." Good day to ye! (*Exit R. carrying box*)

(*EDITH pauses a second, then she smiles as she looks at the money; she drops into the chair at the desk and take up the 'phone.*)

EDITH. (*Calling in 'phone*) 4-6-7-Main. Yes, please. (*While she is waiting for the call, she sings the snatch of song she sang at the opening of her scene; this is continued to a reasonable degree, as might be the case naturally; then she picks up the answer at the 'phone*) Is this Ashley's? Yes—Miss Andrews? This is Miss Ward. You remember the white evening gown I was looking at yesterday—yes. I—I've decided to buy it. Lay it aside and I will send you the money. Good bye. (*She replaces a ten dollar bill in the tin box, and gathers up all the other bills, rising, advancing, pauses c. to tuck the money in her dress. She continues crossing to L. door, about to exit, when DORIS laughs outside L. EDITH pauses—then drawing herself together resolutely, she exits quickly L.*)

SCENE II

The same set. About two weeks later.

(*At rise—Enter simultaneously, EDITH from L.*

NELLIE *from R.* NELLIE *carries three letters, sealed and stamped.*)

EDITH. (*Advancing as she observes the letters*) Letters?

NELLIE. The postman just brought them. (*Advancing to C.* EDITH *quickly, eagerly advances and extends her hand*)

EDITH. (*Glancing over letters*) One for Doris, and two for Mrs. Pierce. I'm sure there must be one for me—let me see. (*Taking the letters out of NELLIE'S hand*)

NELLIE. I'm sorry, but there isn't.

EDITH. There should be one from father.

NELLIE. (*Encouragingly*) Perhaps it will come to-morrow.

EDITH. (*Bitterly*) He has no right to disappoint me. (*Handing the letters to NELLIE, and turning to L. C.*) He knows how anxious I am.

NELLIE. No news is good news, they say.

EDITH. (*Looking at NELLIE*) In this case, no news is *not* good news—for me. (*NELLIE turns toward the desk R.* EDITH *sharp*) I wish you would keep away from that desk—all my personal correspondence is there.

NELLIE. I never molest anything of yours.

EDITH. (*In irritation*) I don't like anyone to linger near my desk—why don't you go upstairs and tidy my room? It looks disgraceful.

(*Enter DORIS R. wearing hat.*)

DORIS. Hello, folks—didn't expect me home so early, did you? (*Advancing, drawing off her gloves*)

EDITH. It's only five o'clock.

DORIS. Not very busy to-day so the boss said I could leave.

EDITH. (*Scornfully*) "The boss"—don't you feel cheap?

DORIS. (*Brightly*) Not a bit—I feel like a millionairess, with a crop of money growing every day. (*Turning to NELLIE*) Letters, Nellie? (*Glancing at the letters in NELLIE'S hand*)

NELLIE. Yes—one for you. (*Extending it—placing the other two in her apron pocket*)

DORIS. (*Taking letter*) That's Tillie's scrawl—(*Tearing open envelope*) The girls are coming in to-day to rehearse for our chorus—I'll be glad when it's over—the ticket committee tells us they have sold a huge lot of tickets for the ball—so of course, as we precede it, there will be a great audience! It gives me stage fright to think of it! I wish you could go Nellie—you always bolster me when I wobble. (*Reading letter*)

NELLIE. I'd love to—but! (*Light laugh*)

DORIS. But—means c'otheres—it's perfectly sinful the way we fret about things to wear! (*Turning to EDITH*) By the way Edith, you haven't said a word about your gown—are you going to wear that o'd wistaria?

EDITH. (*Snappishly*) Don't worry about me, Miss Carter. Perhaps I may surprise you. (*To L. near table*)

DORIS. You would—if you ever give me a civil answer. (*Referring to letter*) Tillie and Mary and the girls will be here to-day—we'll rehearse!

EDITH. Nellie needn't stand around like an ornament. She can tidy my room, and after that, sew buttons on my shoe.

DORIS. (*Indignantly*) Buttons—on your—shoe! Of all the impudence! (*Advancing close to EDITH*) Let me inform you Miss Ward, that if there is any button sewing, you will be the sewer, and not Nellie!

EDITH. (*Turning to DORIS in anger*) You insolent girl!

DORIS. (*To EDITH in anger*) You overbearing, tyrannical nobody!

EDITH. (*Same manner*) You——

DORIS. (*Interrupting quickly*) You—you——

NELLIE. (*Quick—in distress*) Don't quarrel about me—please don't—I shall have to go away if you do.

EDITH. (*To NELLIE, brusquely*) The very best thing—since you can't be of any use here! (*To extreme L. of table*)

DORIS. Aunt Martha and yours truly will be the judge of that!

(*EDITH in temper, seats herself in chair at L. of table L. averted from DORIS and NELLIE.*)

NELLIE. (*Greatly distressed*) It would be best for me to go. (R. C.)

DORIS. I say stay—that settles it. (*Removing her hat. A glance toward EDITH, airily*) If some genius would only write a movie and call it "Edith, the Grouch!" it might reform—*someone!* (*Up to stand where she leaves her hat and gloves*)

NELLIE. I seem to be a storm center—I've tried to please Miss Ward—I've tried to find employment—but nothing goes right—for me. (*Sinking dejectedly in the chair R. C.*)

DORIS. (*Down to NELLIE's chair*) It will, chummy—don't worry—Tillie says—(*Referring to letter*)—there is a very important case we must take up, and that means activity for you—in the field you love—doing good for others. Besides, we have some money in our treasury, and we must arrange to dispense it.

EDITH. (*Rising, quickly, nervously*) I wish you would do something for me Nellie—I want to

send a telegram to father—I'm afraid he's ill.

DORIS. (*Calmly*) Oh no he's not.

EDITH. I haven't heard from him in nearly two weeks

DORIS. You don't care for a letter, unless it contains money.

EDITH. (*Pouting*) How cruel you are! You don't care if I don't go to the ball—you know how anxiously I am expecting a check from father.

DORIS. Wear the old wistaria.

NELLIE. (*Rising*) I will take the telegram if you wish it, Miss Ward.

EDITH. Thank you. (*Crossing rapidly directly across to desk R. where she sits and writes*)

(*Enter from R. LULU, somewhat hurriedly.*)

LULU. (*To DORIS*) Dars a whole flock o' young ladies out dar askin' fo' yo'—Miss Lillie, and Miss Tillie, an' Mis' Mary—an' that dressed up Harris girl.

DORIS. Send them in Lulu.

(*Off R. the laughter of the girls, and chatter of voices.*)

LULU. I 'spees dey is in, honey. (*C. up-stage*)

(*EDITH at desk down R. NELLIE standing down R. of C. DORIS C. looking R. Enter LILLIE and MARY from R. followed by FLORENCE HARRIS. Any number of girls may be used in this scene. All laughing and talking.*)

TILLIE. Hello Doris—how do you like your new job!

MARY. Did you get my note?

TILLIE. We're disgracefully early, aren't we——
(*All laugh.*)

FLORENCE. Dick brought us in his car—we wore

our ball dresses to let you see them. (*If the young ladies wear wraps, they now discard them—LULU taking them, placing them on chair up c. while the girls display their costumes*)

DORIS. (*Delighted*) Girls! Girls! How splendid you look! Edith, do look!

FLORENCE. (*L., observing* EDITH) Didn't expect me, did you Edith?

EDITH. (*Rising, turning to the others*) No, I didn't.

FLORENCE. I thought it would seem rather mean if I didn't help out—you're in the chorus, aren't you?

EDITH. No——

DORIS. Edith wouldn't join us—though she sings ever so well—you coax her.

FLORENCE. All the girls want to come in now they see how successful it will be. Anyhow, you'll rehearse, because somebody is missing.

DORIS. So will Nellie. (*Advancing to NELLIE—to FLORENCE*) Have you met Miss Tucker?

FLORENCE. How do you do Miss Tucker.

NELLIE. Miss Harris.

TILLIE. Nellie! our secretary and treasurer! There won't be a cent in our treasury when I get through reporting all the folks we must help.

(*EDITH remains near the desk, attempting to overcome her nervousness and apprehension.*)

FLORENCE. Come, girls, let's begin!

(*A musical number may be introduced here; all the girls joining; at the end, the extra girls exit R. leaving the principals on the scene. If only the members of the cast are employed in the specialty, LULU may join for a comic finish, and exit L. at the end. If music is not introduced,*

continue the dialogue as it stands, omitting only FLORENCE'S line—"Let's begin." Take these positions to continue: EDITH in front of chair R. C. NELLIE R. up-stage a bit. TILLIE and MARY L. a'ove table—arms about each other. FLORENCE down L. of table. DORIS a rather up-stage. The musical number should be commenced so the girls feel naturally into these positions.)

DORIS. (To Florence) Sorry, you'll be the life of the ball in that lovely gown.

FLORENCE. I'm glad you like it. (To NELLIE) What are you going to wear, Miss Tucker?

NELLIE. I am not going.

FLORENCE. (Astonished) You don't mean it!

DORIS. Don't quiz Nellie—she can't go—it's terribly sad—but it's true.

NELLIE. (Frankly) I cannot afford it—that's why, Miss Harris.

FLORENCE. (Politely) I beg your pardon—I didn't know.

TILLIE. Let's get to our club business, Doris——

FLORENCE. I'm in the way——

EDITH. So am I.

DORIS. Indeed you're not—you two non-members. Listen, and be converted. Sit down, girls.

(FLORENCE sits L. of table L. MARY R. of table. TILLIE stands back of table, EDITH drops into chair R. C. ill at ease. NELLIE and DORIS remain standing in same positions—all attentive to DORIS. The L. door opens noiselessly, and MRS. PIERCE, observing the girls are engaged, remains in doorway, quiet, unobserved. As they reach position, MAGGIE MCCARTHY appears in R. doorway, pausing, unobserved)

MARY. I think we should first take up the case

of Mrs. Ewing—It is very urgent.

DORIS. Nellie has a report—(*Looking at NELLIE*) Let's hear it.

NELLIE. (*A step toward C. as DORIS gives way*) Mrs. Ewing is a cripple—she was injured in an industrial accident years ago; her only means of support was her son, John; he was drafted; early in the war, he was in the trenches. He was wounded twice; when he recovered, he went back to the side of his comrades. Then came the final drive, and John fell—his brave young heart pierced by a bullet—his soul had fled, and his body lies in France.

FLORENCE. (*With interest*) Was he her only son?

NELLIE. He was all she had—she is alone.

FLORENCE. But the government will care for her?

NELLIE. It is slow—someone must fill in—that is the work our club has undertaken in its small way—to bridge delay. You have no idea how many widows and children and aged parents are suffering—some are ill, some have lost their homes—how ungrateful we must seem to them, after their sacrifices!

DORIS. What shall we do, fellow members?

TILLIE. I move that we appropriate fifty dollars from our fund to apply to the relief of John Ewing's mother.

MARY. Second the motion.

DORIS. It is moved and seconded that we give the sum of fifty dollars—

EDITH. (*Rising quickly, excitedly*) How rash you are! If you give all this money to one person—you will have nothing left!

FLORENCE. You are not a member, Edith—you have no voice—but I'm going to join if you will have me. (*Rising*)

DORIS. You dear! Indeed we will. (*To NELLIE*) How much have we in the treasury Nellie? Open the box.

(*EDITH, endeavoring to control her nervous fear, moves to extreme R. while NELLIE advances to desk and picks up the box.*)

MAGGIE. (*Advancing a step*) Excuse me m'am—I just came in—

DORIS. (*Checking MAGGIE*) One moment, Maggie, we are counting our cash.

(*All quiet, looking at NELLIE, as she picks up the box and returns to C. opening it. DORIS L. of NELLIE, the others maintaining same position. NELLIE picks up the single bill from the box, and discovers that the other bills have disappeared.*)

NELLIE. (*In consternation*) The money! The money—it's gone—Doris—it's gone, all but this! (*The single bill*)

DORIS and MRS. P. (*Amazed*) Gone!

(*The others move a bit, expressing astonishment.*)

NELLIE. (*Excitedly*) It's gone I tell you—there was seventy-five dollars here and now—there is only ten left!

DORIS. (*Taking box—excitedly*) It's true—only a single bill—Nellie!

MRS. P. (*Advancing—to NELLIE*) Are you sure you put it in the box?

NELLIE. (*Quick*) Certain—as certain as can be—I was alarmed when there was a robbery across the street from Mrs. McCarthy's—and when I brought it here there was seventy-five dollars in the

box—the day I came—and placed it in the desk—
(*Looking at EDITH*) You saw me——

EDITH. No one saw the money in the box——

NELLIE. You don't doubt that it was there—!

EDITH. (*Advancing a step*) Now it is gone—
from my desk.

NELLIE. (*Excitedly*) Someone has taken it!

EDITH. That is clear——

DORIS. (*Greatly distressed*) Girls! What shall
we do?

NELLIE. The money—for the helpless—for those
who had suffered for us—who could be so cruel—
so terribly dishonest!

(*EDITH winces at the word "dishonest."*)

EDITH. It must have been someone who knew
it was there—someone who needed it—very much—
someone who had no money—and no work! (*Look-
ing at NELLIE*)

Mrs. P. Only members of this family knew about
it, and we did not take it.

NELLIE. (*In great distress*) Oh Mrs. Pierce,
don't even dream of such a thing! I am responsible
for it—what shall I do? (*The others look at NELLIE
a bit coldly, and turn a bit away*)

Mrs. P. I really don't know my dear; it is very
disappointing, very puzzling.

FLORENCE. It would have been better if you had
elected a treasurer who is financially responsible.

DORIS. (*Reprovingly*) Florrie—I can't bear that
insinuation—you might as well accuse me, as Nellie!

FLORENCE. (*Still more coldly*) I wouldn't care
to join a club that might have its treasury robbed
at any time.

NELLIE. (*Looking at FLORENCE*) That is intended
for me, Miss Harris. Whether you believe me or
not, I tell you the truth, I did not steal this money.
(*Indignantly*) Do you think I could, from such a
cause!

MAGGIE. (*Alert*) Steal, did ye say?

EDITH. (*Sharp*) Maggie, mind your own business!

MAGGIE. (*Wrathfully*) I've got, though me mother says the same a hundred times a day. I don't know the which and the what o' this—but I remember one thing, and that is——

EDITH. (*Strong and harsh—advancing to near chair R. C.*) Maggie!

MAGGIE. (*Ignoring EDITH, continuing firmly*) And that is—about two weeks ago I came through that door—(*indicating R.*)—bringing a waist for Miss Edith—and askin' for me mother's pay; as I turned me head, standin' by the desk was Miss Edith—with a big bunch of money in her hand—and a little box on the desk beside her!

DORIS. (*Excitedly*) Is that the box? (*Showing it*)

MAGGIE. (*Looking at the box*) It is! The very box!

MRS. P. (*Horried*) Edith!

DORIS. (*Same manner*) Edith!

(*All the girls, astonished and horrified, looking at EDITH. LULU appears in L. doorway.*)

MRS. P. (*To EDITH, sternly*) What do you say?

EDITH. (*Collapse*) I—I only borrowed it! (*In state of collapse, her hands clasped convulsively, and sobbing, she sinks in the chair R. C.*)

MRS. P. (*Sternly*) You stole it!

EDITH. (*Hysterically*) Don't say that—I never took anything in my life before—I wanted to go to the ball—and I wanted to look pretty, like the other girls—I only borrowed—I intended to pay it back when father sent the check—it's the truth—I intended to pay it back! Then, you would never know! (*Weeping hysterically. The girls all move*

a step painfully conscious of the situation, and looking away from EDITH who is buried in the chair overcome with distress)

MRS. P. (*Sternly*) We would never know—no thought ever came to you of the great wrong you were doing—no thought of how you might ruin the fair name of another and put the fearful stigma of dishonesty upon an innocent person.

EDITH. (*Weeping*) No—I never thought of it—

MRS. P. (*Sternly*) You thought only of yourself—your own selfish wishes. There is a Commandment which says—"Thou shalt not steal," and another—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." We have been through a terrible war because of the injustice and cruelty of one nation! That nation failed! But selfishness and cruelty in the individual heart can wreck lives and reputations as well as war!

EDITH. (*Continuing to weep*) I never thought of it like that.

MRS. P. You must learn as autocracy learned. (*To L. C.*)

EDITH. (*Looking up*) What will you do—with me?

MRS. P. (*L. C.*) I will write the whole story to your father—he shall deal with you as you deserve.

EDITH. Oh Aunt Martha, don't tell him, please, please don't! He is so stern he will never forgive me—never! (*Weeping*)

MRS. P. (*Sternly*) Do you think you deserve forgiveness after such a fearful act?

EDITH. I see it now just as it is—all you say cannot make it worse—I can only tell you that I am sorry, oh, so sorry—I will do anything you wish to prove it—I'll work to pay the money. I know my friends despise me—that is my punishment! (*Bowing her head*)

MRS. P. (*Sternly*) I want you to learn so

thoroughly, that you will repent, and never while you live, be guilty of a dishonest or unjust act toward anyone!

NELLIE. (*Advancing to c.*) Mrs. Pierce—let us not be so hard on Edith—strong hearts have yielded to temptation—you have spoken of the Commandments—let us remember that it is our duty to forgive. Edith has been humiliated—that must hurt her very deeply. She has confessed—she wishes to repent. Give her a chance. (*Turning to EDITH*) I forgive you Edith, fully, and if you will let me be your friend, I will try to help you conquer yourself. (*Laying her hand gently on EDITH's head*)

DORIS. (*Subdued*) Nellie is right Aunt Martha—perhaps we all agree with her—(*Looking at the others*) Do we girls?

LULIE and MARY. Of course we do.

MAGGIE. (*To EDITH, subdued*) I'm sorry for ye Edith, indeed I am—and I hope ye won't think hard of me for telling the truth—me mother always taught me.

EDITH. (*Rising, tearfully, but with more self-control*!) You are all very good—so much better than I deserve. You can't think how fearful it is to keep a secret like this—I'm glad you know—

NELLIE. We know you only intended to borrow it.

MAGGIE. Sure there are lots of girls like you Miss Edith, proud and with a mind for themselves—not thinkin' of others—and that's what makes all the trouble—me mother says. It takes a girl like Nellie here with a strong mind to teach us our duty, and that we're not here only to be dressin' up in fine clothes an' thinkin' o' balls and movies! We're here to be doin' somethin' for them that needs us—that's what me mother says!

DORIS. (*To FLORENCE*) What do you say, Florence?

FLORENCE. It's a perfect revelation to me—what I've learned in the last few moments! It just stripes one of mean and selfish thoughts. We ought to tag everybody who ever does a cruel and unjust act—like they tag chops in the butcher shop!

LULU. (*Up-stage*) Das right honey, das right.

EDITH. But there's Mrs. Ewing—

FLORENCE. Don't worry about that—father has been wonderfully generous to me this month—I'm going to send you a hundred dollars as a donation, and join your club! So, Mrs. Ewing won't have to wait a minute!

EDITH. I'm going to pay it back—that will be my penance.

MRS. P. (*Seated R. of table, looking at NELLIE*) You said, my dear, you hoped to repay us some day. Since you have completely made Edith over—we are in your debt.

DORIS. (*Center, taking NELLIE's hand*) Yes, indeed!

FLORENCE. She has made me over, too—and she's going to that ball!

NELLIE. I'm very happy if you think I've made good!

Curtain.



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